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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was administered at North Carolina State University in 1975 to determine the role of the university counseling center. The questionnaire was administered routinely as part of the intake process. Information is presented on the following: intakes on a monthly basis, ages of clients served, breakdown of clientele by sex, marital status of clients, enrollment status of sample, year in school, students' place of residence, source of referral, initial source of information about the center, kind of services desired, a breakdown of the sample by academic curriculum, and students' grade point average. Students most served by the counseling center were in the 18-20 age range, were in their first two undergraduate years, and lived off campus. These students were predominately currently enrolled, single, and often enrolled in a liberal arts curriculum. The students were more often than not self-referred, although faculty members were also an important source of referral. The most important sources of initial information about counseling services were freshman orientation and faculty members. A large percentage of the sample utilize the center for purposes of withdrawing from school. When these are excluded, the highest percentage of those remaining seek help with academic problems. The rest of the sample was evenly split between students seeking services in the vocational and personal adjustment areas. (SW)

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS SEEKING SERVICES AT THE N. C. STATE UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER

Spring, 1975

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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Student Affairs Planning and Research
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Introduction

During the spring semester of 1975, the N. C. State University Counseling Center attempted to gain a better idea of it's role within the campus community. One aspect of this effort was to obtain information descriptive of the types of clientele served by the Center, the kinds of services sought, and the process of referral.

Method

In order to address the above issues, a brief questionnaire was developed. Throughout the spring semester, the questionnaire was administered routinely as a part of the intake process. The student, upon entering the counseling office, was asked by the secretarial staff to fill out the one page questionnaire along with his intake card as he waited to see a counselor. A given student filled out the questionnaire only once, even though he might have returned to the Center later in the semester with a different presenting problem. Also, students who were referred or given appointments by telephone were not included in the survey.

The questionnaire was developed in collaboration with the counseling staff and the Office of Planning and Research of the Division of Student Affairs. The final instrument consisted of the following twelve items: age, sex, marital status, enrollment status, year in school, residence, referral source, source of initial information about the Counseling Center, whether the student had been to the Center before, present purpose for seeking services, academic school in which the student was enrolled and grade point average. A record was also kept of the date on which questionnaires were completed to obtain a rough idea of fluctuation in demand for services over time.

As a rule the questionnaire took less than a minute to complete and was completely voluntary. Few students objected to the procedure.

The following results represent questionnaires completed by four hundred eighty-seven students.

Results

The tabulated results are presented for the readers perusal at the end of the present summary. When the data was tabluated it was discovered that a significant proportion of the students surveyed had come to the Center for the purpose of withdrawal. For this reason, the following tables present the findings with these students excluded as well as the data for the total sample. In some instances this factor made a good deal of difference in the overall results on a given item.

The first item covered in the tables relates to the number of intakes for each month during the semester. There is a general trend for students to come to the Center in greater numbers at the beginning of the semester, particularly during the month of January. This trend indicates a fairly consistent decrease in intakes as the semester progresses. This is particularly true when withdrawal students are excluded.

The results on age of clients served is presented in the next table. Though a significant number of students were reluctant to report their age, the findings are such as might be expected. Of those surveyed, significantly over fifty percent of those served fall into the age ranges from eighteen to twenty. This was true for the total sample as well as for the sample excluding withdrawal. The total sample ranged in age from sixteen to forty-four.

The data on sex in the sample indicates that slightly over three fourths of those served are males, while the remaining fourth are female. This is true whether or not students withdrawing from school are considered. These proportions are roughly equivalent to those found on the campus as a whole.

When looking at marital status one finds that, as expected, most of those served are single. While three fourths of the clients fell into this category, about twenty percent of those served were married, while the remaining 4.5 percent were either divorced, separated or widowed.

Eighty-five percent of those filling out the questionnaire listed themselves as currently enrolled NCSU students. This percentage is reduced to 77% when one excludes withdrawals. This slight difference obviously results from the fact that if one is not a currently enrolled student one cannot be a part of the withdrawal process. The next highest percentage of those sampled were former NCSU students accounting for 7-10% of those responding. The remaining persons were non-students, "other", or those who did not respond to the item.

When looking at clients served by year in school one learns that those most often seeking services are freshmen. When looking at the total sample one finds that approximately a third of those completing questionnaires were freshmen. This rises to forty percent when withdrawals are excluded, which is perhaps indicative of the fact that fewer freshmen withdraw. The next highest percentage of services are received by sophomores who accounted for approximately a fifth of those responding. The consistent trend was one of decreasing demand for services with increasing years in school. The results on this item should be viewed with a slight bit of caution as thirty-three persons did not list a response.

The results on the clients' place of residence indicates that approximately two thirds of the students served by the Counseling Center live off-campus while less than a third of the respondents lived in the residence halls. This is of particular interest, since at the time of the survey the number of students living on and off campus was approximately fifty percent each. Such a finding may be indicative of the fact that students in the residence halls have greater support in problem solving in their living environment than do off-campus students.

It may also be indicative of the fact that residence hall staff are less likely than any other group to refer students for counseling services. As is noted from the table on referral source, approximately half of the students are self referred. The next most frequent referral source is a faculty adviser or other faculty member. Also, a significant number of students checked the "other" category or failed to respond at all to this item. When withdrawals are excluded from these findings, there is no great change in the configural trend.

When students are asked how they found out about the Counseling Center in the first place, they most often list freshman orientation, faculty advisers or other faculty members, fellow students, or "other" as sources of information. These categories were fairly evenly distributed among themselves and account for over two thirds of those responding. Brochures around campus also seem to be a good source of initial information about counseling services. The results on this item should be viewed with caution, however, as fifty-three persons did not respond to it.

The students sampled were also asked if they were visiting the Counseling Center for the first time. Nearly two-thirds of the sample indicated that this was the case, while the remaining third reported that they had previously received services.

When inquiry was made into the nature of the service sought, it was found that a sizeable percentage of the sample had come to the Center for withdrawal counseling. The next highest percentage of the sample were seeking help in dealing with problems of an academic nature. Most of the remaining students were fairly evenly split between seeking help in the vocational or personal area. The latter is true whether one considers the sample including or excluding withdrawals.

Students were also asked to list the academic school in which they were enrolled at the time they completed the questionnaire. The table indicates that well over a third of the sample were liberal arts students. Other frequent users of the Center were those enrolled in Engineering and Agriculture and Life Sciences curriculums. Less frequent users were students from design, textiles and agricultural institute studies. There were, however, significant numbers of students failing to respond to this item on the survey.

Finally, respondents were asked their grade point average. The results on this item should be viewed with a good bit of caution as ninety-one respondents did not register an answer in this connection. Of those answers tabulated, about half fall within the 2.1 to 3.0 range. Nearly twenty percent reported an average of 3.1 or above, while approximately a third of the sample fell below a 2.0 average. It is suspected that a significant number of students not reporting their grade average would have fallen into the lower GPA range. Changes in the frequency tables that occur when one excludes withdrawal may be indicative of this possibility.

In summary, those students most served by the Counseling Center fell into the 18-20 age range, were in their first two undergraduate years and lived off campus. These students were predominately currently enrolled, single, and often enrolled in a liberal arts curriculum.

The students were more often than not self-referred, although faculty members were also an important source of referral. Residence hall staff were least likely to refer students to the Center. The most important sources of initial information about Counseling services were freshman orientation and faculty members.

Finally, a large percentage of the sample surveyed utilize the Center for purposes of withdrawing from school. When these are excluded, the highest percentage of those remaining seek help with academic problems. The rest of the sample was evenly split between students seeking services in the vocational and personal adjustment areas.

TABLE I

Intakes on a Monthly Basis

Month	Frequency	Percent	Excluding Withdrawals Frequency	Excluding Withdrawals Percentage
January	162	33.265	108	36.860
February	104	21.355	61	20.819
March	129	26.489	55	18.771
April	71	14.579	53	18.089
May	21	4.312	16	5.461
TOTALS	487	100.000	293	100.000

TABLE II

Ages of Clients Served

			Excluding Withdrawals	
Age	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percentage
16	1	0.242	1	.397
17	7	1.691	6	2.381
18	71	17.150	52	20.635
19	78	18.841	54	21.429
20	65	15.700	33	13.095
21	41	9.903	28	11.111
22	36	8.696	19	7.540
23	24	5.797	13	5.159
24	15	3.623	10	3.968
25	23	5.556	11	4.365
26	10	2.415	6	2.381
27	5	1.208	4	1.587
28	6	1.449	2	.794
29	7	1.691	3	1.190
30	9	2.174	4	1.587
31	1	0.242	1	.397
34	4	0.966	2	.794
35	2	0.483	1	.397
37	3	0.725	1	.397
38	2	0.483	---	---
40	2	0.483	---	---
43	1	0.242	---	---
44	1	0.242	1	.397
TOTALS	414	100.000	252	100.000

(73 Missing Values) (41 Missing Values)

TABLE III

Breakdown of Clientele by Sex

			Excluding Withdrawals	
Sex	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percentage
Male	349	71.959	207	71.134
Female	136	28.041	84	28.866
TOTALS	485	100.000	291	100.000
(2 Missing Values)			(2 Missing Values)	

TABLE IV

Marital Status of Clients

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent	Excluding Withdrawals	
			Frequency	Percentage
Single	369	75.926	235	80.205
Married	96	19.753	48	16.382
Divorced or Separated	20	4.115	9	3.072
Widowed	1	0.206	1	.341
T O T A L S	486	100.000	293	100.000

(1 Missing Value)

TABLE V

Enroll Status of Sample

Status	Frequency	Percent	Excluding Withdrawals Frequency	Excluding Withdrawals Percent
Currently Enrolled NCSU Student	397	85.193	213	77.174
Former NCSU Student	34	7.296	29	10.507
Non-Student	21	4.506	21	7.609
Other	14	3.004	13	4.710
T O T A L S	466	100.000	276	100.000
	(21 Missing Values)		(17 Missing Values)	

TABLE VI

Breakdown of Clients by Year in School

			Excluding Withdrawals	
Class	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Freshman	154	33.921	103	39.163
Sophomore	108	23.789	57	21.673
Junior	74	16.300	44	16.730
Senior	47	10.352	26	9.886
Graduate	50	11.013	22	8.365
Other	21	4.626	11	4.183
TOTALS	454	100.000	263	100.000
(33 Missing Values)			(30 Missing Values)	

TABLE VII

Place of Residence of Students Served

			Excluding Withdrawals	
Live	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
In a Residence Hall	135	28.481	90	31.915
In a Fraternity House	15	3.165	6	2.128
At McKimmon Village	3	0.633	1	.355
Off-Campus	321	67.722	185	65.603
T O T A L S	474	100.000	282	100.000
(13 Missing Values)			(11 Missing Values)	

TABLE VIII

How Students are Referred to the Center

			Excluding Withdrawals	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Self	230	49.784	144	51.429
Infirmary	8	1.732	6	2.143
Family	14	3.030	14	5.000
Fellow Student	27	5.844	22	7.857
Residence Hall Staff Member	5	1.082	3	1.071
Faculty Advisor or Other Faculty Member	107	23.160	48	17.143
Other	71	15.368	43	15.357
TOTALS	462	100.000	280	100.000
	(25 Missing Values)			(13 Missing Values)

TABLE IX

How Students Initially Find Out About the Center

			Excluding Withdrawals	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Freshman Orientation	105	24.194	67	25.379
Brochures Available Around Campus	56	12.903	32	12.121
Faculty Adviser or Other Faculty Member	102	23.502	52	19.697
Fellow Student	72	16.590	47	17.803
Residence Hall Staff Member	3	0.691	2	.758
The Technician	7	1.613	4	1.515
Other	89	20.507	60	22.727
TOTALS	434	100.000	264	100.000
	(53 Missing Values)		(29 Missing Values)	

TABLE X

Is this the Students First Visit to the Center?

			Excluding Withdrawals	
First	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	308	63.636	175	60.345
No	176	36.364	115	39.655
TOTALS	484	100.000	290	100.000
	(3 Missing Values)		(3 Missing Values)	

TABLE XI

Kind of Services Sought by the Sample

			Excluding Withdrawals	
Purpose	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Academic	141	31.544	141	55.731
Personal	43	9.620	43	16.996
Vocational	44	9.843	44	17.391
Withdrawal	194	43.400	--	--
Other	25	5.593	25	9.881
TOTALS	447	100.000	253	100.000
	(40 Missing Values)		(40 Missing Values)	

TABLE XII

A Breakdown of the Sample by Academic Curriculum

School	Frequency	Percent	Excluding Withdrawals Frequency	Excluding Withdrawals Percent
Agriculture and Life Sciences	88	20.853	50	21.008
Design	8	1.896	7	2.941
Education	22	5.213	13	5.462
Engineering	68	16.114	39	16.387
Forest Resources	18	4.265	7	2.941
Liberal Arts	150	35.545	89	37.395
Physical and Mathematical Sciences	39	9.242	19	7.983
Textiles	14	3.318	9	3.782
Agriculture Institute	15	3.555	5	2.101
TOTALS	422	100.000	238	100.000
	(65 Missing Values)		(55 Missing Values)	

TABLE XIII

Grade Averages of Students Served

			Excluding Withdrawals	
GPA	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
4.0 - 3.1	78	19.697	45	19.737
3.0 - 2.1	184	46.465	109	47.807
2.0 - 1.1	108	27.273	62	27.193
1.0 - 0.0	26	6.566	12	5.263
TOTALS	396	100.000	228	100.000
	(91 Missing Values)		(65 Missing Values)	